

Good evening,

My name is Dorothy Herter and I am a current on the sex offender registry. I am writing to oppose HB 5679. I wanted to take this opportunity to explain how being on the registry has negatively impacted my and my family's lives.

I am in no way avoiding responsibility for my actions. I made a terrible choice to have an inappropriate relationship with a former student of mine almost 10 years ago. I was living in another state with my now ex-husband and two children. I was in an emotionally and physically abusive marriage, five states away from my family, and in a place emotionally that was so dark it's hard to put into words. I was very fortunate that my judge allowed my probation to be transferred to Michigan, I moved in with my parents, and found work. However, I had to go through a nasty custody battle, a Personal Protection Order against my ex husband, his bankruptcy, and to be honest, all of the emotions of handling my probation and sex offender registry.

It has been a decade since everything happened. I am a completely different person. My ex husband and I are working on figuring out joint custody, but in order to do that, I will be driving two hours to get them to him so he can take them to school. One of the ways the registry has negatively impacted my life, is I can never take my kids to school. I can't see them graduate or be involved on any level with their education. If my children become involved in after school activities or sports, I can never attend a game - EVER. This not only is difficult for me to swallow, but also to have to explain to my kids. It is heartbreaking. In addition to that, my ex husband and my parents have to pick up where I can't be involved - which makes their lives more stressful. My children and possibly my grandchildren are going to be effected by my actions - and that isn't fair.

Another way the registry has negatively impacted my life is living and working restrictions. I am trying to buy a house, but I have to check every potential residence and place of employment to see how far they are away from a school zone, daycare, park, etc. I have had to decline several job offers as well as find other places to live because of this. I cannot further my life or provide a different life for my children because of the living restrictions.

Another reason the registry has negatively impacted my life is my professional career/ability to get a job. I have a master's degree and gave up my teaching certificate, and never have any chance of working a professional career ever again. I feel so passionate about helping adults with criminal backgrounds and helping them obtain education (like GED's), working with their mental health (like a social worker or psychologist); however, I can never do that because I am on the sex offender registry. This means that I will end up working jobs for minimal pay and taking jobs I know I am overqualified for, but I don't have a choice. I need to provide for my children and that is how I have to do it.

A third reason it has negatively impacted my life is my overall mental health. There are some days that my anxiety and depression can really effect me overall. I will second guess if my neighbors know, if a coworker will find out, if someone will deliberately seek me out to hurt me because the registry is public to anyone. I still need to talk to my children about what I did and I plan to do so with the help of a professional therapist, but in all reality, it takes one google search to find me. That is debilitating. The fear it creates has made me stay awake all night more times than I can count. Anytime I see a police car in my neighborhood, I think they're coming to my house in front of my neighbors and children. It's exhausting to say the least.

There are other reasons, but I was trying to keep this short. This is a very emotional subject for me as it has completely altered my and my family's lives. I accept responsibility for my actions 100%, but it has been 10 years and I have changed my life completely around. The sex offender registry needs to be an assessment based system rather than an umbrella system and not public. There needs to be definite consequences, but what is in place is not deterring anyone from doing a crime.

Thank you for your time,

Dorothy Herter